

behave like the members of the Grateful Dead, Uncle John's Band still has the ability to please and entertain audiences by delivering quality, note-perfect Dead covers to the community.

www.unclejohnsband.com

BEST TOURIST TRAP

Busch Gardens

Aww, come on, guys. Tourist trap? If Disney is nervous enough about our little amusement park to try to create a world-class zoo of its own, don't you think Busch Gardens has transcended the appellation of "tourist trap?" Busch Gardens is great! As zoos go, it's one of the most accessible and well designed in the country, with a very successful breeding program and an eye for wildlife preservation. The roller coasters are nothing to sneeze at either, and if the place can divert a single tourist from the giant black hole of Orlando/Kissimmee, we say more power to 'em. Yeah it's overpriced, and those lines can get long, and the walkways aren't organized very conveniently, and the whole place is tinged with the odor of cotton candy and elephant dung — but they give you FREE BEER. And that's worth more than an alleged cheap feel from Tigger any day.

Busch Gardens, 3000 E Busch Blvd., Tampa, 888-800-5447.

BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING

La France

La France is an Ybor City institution. Founded 30 years ago, when Ybor was still "that place with the crumbling cigar factories and artists," and persisting past the period of "that place with all the weirdo club hoppers," the vintage shop has settled comfortably into its rightful place as the premier boutique in "that place with all the funky boutiques." Carrying both genuine vintage and quality reproductions, La France features clothing from every major fashion era of the 20th century. Flippy flapper dresses, swinging McCartney-era frocks and '70s-style gaucho pants co-exist on La France's crowded racks. We're certifiable hat freaks, and there are few places we'd rather go to get our millinery fix. Funky old handbags, intricate costume jewelry and other vintage knick-knacks hidden in the shop's many nooks and crannies make La France a fun place to browse and buy.

La France, 1612 E. Seventh Ave., Ybor City, 813-248-1381.

BEST THRIFT STORE/ PINELLAS

TIE: Salvation Army/Goodwill

Sometimes, there's no need to get fancy. With uppity "consignment shops" charging department store prices for used clothing, the pool of true thrift stores shrinks by the month. Luckily, the meat and potatoes of thrift, the Salvation

Army and Goodwill are still there with their \$5 stonewashed Jordache jeans and 50-cent mismatched stilettos. It may take more digging than at funkier thrift stores, but there's gold in them thar racks for obsessive bargain hunters willing to look. And clothing is not the only thing on hand — cheap dish sets, old books, much-loved appliances and only slightly dingy furniture have been furnishing folks' first apartments for years. One can always count on the Salvation Army and Goodwill for the most extensive, if not the choicest, selection of goods in town. Plus, it's charity. God bless 'em, and carry on Christian soldiers and other, nondenominational workers of benevolence.

Goodwill and Salvation Army have locations throughout the Bay area. Visit www.salvationarmyusa.org or www.goodwill.org.

BEST THRIFT STORE/ HILLSBOROUGH

Sunshine Thrift Store

Bargain hunting, for some, is almost like a sporting event, and Sunshine Thrift Store is the ultimate playing field. Shoppers can find an abundance of inexpensive treasures, including a complete line of men's, women's and children's fashions, miscellaneous household items, electronics, furniture, jewelry, shoes and more in a building the size of a grocery store. Sunshine also offers monthly half-price sales. Of course, the crowds get a little overzealous (watch out for the shrewd mamas who are ready to mow you down with their carts if you get in their way), but in the end, it's well worth the danger. Don't miss out on the next sale that takes place Oct. 14.

Sunshine Thrift Store, 4304 S. Dale Mabry, Tampa, 813-831-4377, www.sunshinethrift.com.

BEST MALL

International Plaza

Tampa Bay's first upscale mall has all the usual high-end stuff, like \$500 shirts, \$1,000 purses and laptop computers that'll tidy up the house while they do your bills, but the place is actually good for deal-hunting too. Dillard's, especially, has regular blowout sales on designer clothes. Nordstrom is one of the classiest stores in the land and Neiman Marcus is there if you just have too much of that pesky money lying around. International is nicely laid out, and comes with all the amenities, including a restaurant/bar promenade called Bay Street that's a destination in its own right.

International Plaza, 2223 N. West Shore Blvd., Tampa, 813-342-3790, www.shopinternationalplaza.com.

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